



Inside CFSA



For Our Child-Serving Community

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Smooth Top Management Transitions Keep CFSA Moving Forward

Brenda Donald Walker became CFSA interim director April 26. Taking the reins from Olivia Golden, former Chief of Staff Walker (many of you know her as Brenda Donald, but she is now using her married name), inherited a program of reform that has her racing the clock and the calendar, but she is well suited to the task.

"As chief of staff, it was my job to keep the train moving even though we were often laying the track only a few feet ahead of the moving train," Walker says. "The critical nature of CFSA's reforms require a fast pace, which is how we have been able accomplish as much as we have in the past three years. As we all know, children can't wait."

Native-Washingtonian Walker describes herself as "an empowering manager who provides guidance, direction and support so the team can do its best." Walker is committed to maintaining standards and superior performance across the board, holding everyone—including herself—accountable for their responsibilities.



Walker wants to guide CFSA as a mission-driven agency that keeps children safe but also helps them thrive. She sees her biggest challenge as her biggest opportunity—creating an organizational culture that is child-focused instead of crisis oriented and compliance driven.

Walker comes to this position with strong public and non-profit management experience. Before joining CFSA, she was vice president for municipal programs with the non-profit DC Agenda for five years where she worked closely with the Healthy Families/Thriving Communities Collaboratives. Before that, Walker was an Annie E. Casey Foundation fellow and served in various city management positions with the City of Little Rock, AR, including two years as assistant city manager. Walker holds a bachelor's degree in journalism from George Washington University and a master's degree in public administration from the University of Arkansas.

She sums up her approach to management philosophically: "There is no 'I' in team. It takes a team to get the work done, and every member of the team is important. It's important to note that the team is not just CFSA staff but also our external partners and stakeholders."

CFSA Hires Experienced Deputy Director, Program Operations

Sarah Maxwell, former deputy director/human services administrator for Hennepin County, MN, joined CFSA's senior management team as deputy director for program operations April 19. Selected after an extensive search, Sarah is an MSW with over 25 years of experience in child welfare.

As deputy director/ human services administrator for Hennepin County, Maxwell led a department of 750 employees and was responsible for more than 16 programs in the Child, Family and Adult Services Department. Maxwell characterizes her previous work by noting similarities to the challenges she faces here at CFSA.

"We had to make dramatic organizational changes to improve our ability to accomplish safety and stability," Maxwell observed. "Because we learned as much from our mistakes as our 'right ones,' it was important to create an environment where it was safe to make mistakes."



Maxwell sees her most important accomplishments to date as those that have allowed her to problem-solve with agency staff and develop resources for families and children. It has been equally important to her to make certain workers and staff had the support and resources they needed.

"As you move up and away from the direct service arena, it is easy to lose perspective on how things impact children and families," Maxwell said. "Staff knows, and you can check in with them." In her new capacity, Maxwell is committed to finding a way to "be connected to staff and supervisors."

Maxwell grew up in Iowa and earned a BA in sociology/psychology from Duchesne College, Omaha, NE, and an MSW from St. Louis University in Missouri. Upon graduation, Maxwell accepted a job as a public-school social worker in Joliet, IL. In 1978, her husband, also a social worker, accepted a job in Minneapolis, so they both relocated. Maxwell found a job with Hennepin County, where she remained until coming to CFSA.

CFSA Public Information faxes this newsletter monthly to providers and other partners. To offer comments or to update your fax number, call (202) 442-4246. Editor: Niki Mitchell. ■